

AWARDS 2007 DISPLAYS

EXPERT'S REPORT

Monitors, projectors and LCD TVs are all necessary but not always particularly exciting PC peripherals. Until 2007, that is. All three categories are now brimming over with new devices, and prices have dropped dramatically.

The widescreen format proved hugely popular, and our Best Display 2007 winner reflects this trend. However, not everyone has the space for a large widescreen; a traditional 19in non-widescreen is still the ideal business workhorse.

A good data projector can also be a business essential, and we were pleased to find our award-winner in this category was just as good at showing movies in a 16:9 format. Finally, we also have an award for the best LCD TV, as this is the ideal type of display for a media centre PC.

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HANNSG HW223DP

Whether for work or play, a widescreen monitor makes a lot of sense these days. For office work, the widescreen ratio feels more natural and it makes working on Excel documents easier. For home users, the wider aspect ratio matches the format used by DVDs and HD, so video doesn't have to be displayed with black bars or resized to fit.

Prices of widescreen panels fell dramatically in 2006, and have continued to drop in 2007. Many manufacturers have taken advantage of this to release larger, cheaper monitors. HannsG has taken this a step further with a 22in monitor that is packed with features for less than £200 including VAT.

The HW223DP's moulded curves, brushed-silver surround and black stand look classy and will suit either an office or living room. The display produces a clear, sharp image using both D-sub and DVI inputs, with colours that look rich and natural even though there's no glossy coating. In fact, this is an advantage if you don't want lots of reflections. Skin tones look slightly ruddy, but this is noticeable only when viewed alongside other good monitors. It has a respectable 5ms black-to-black response time, and we detected no blurring or streaking when watching fast-moving images or playing action-packed games.

The monitor can scale 1080p video to its native resolution of 1,680x1,050. Usefully, an adaptor in the box lets you connect a component video source to its DVI input. The HW223DP also supports High-bandwidth Digital Copy Protection (HDCP), so it's a



good choice for watching HD material. By supporting HDCP, a device can authenticate itself to HD video sources, proving that it's a safe method for displaying video and not a device that could be used to copy it.

The built-in 3W speakers produce excellent sound. Clear at loud volumes, they also produce a good amount of bass. There are dedicated control buttons for adjusting the volume, but not for brightness or contrast. Connectivity options are completed by the 3½mm jack for audio and an extremely handy four-port USB hub.

It's an economical display as well, using just 49W of power when in full use. Most monitors of this size use between 60W and 90W. An excellent monitor, the HW223DP shows that a good-looking design, superb image quality and stacks of features don't have to cost the earth.

22in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,680x1,050 native resolution, 800:1 contrast ratio, 5ms response time (black-to-black), D-sub, DVI, 3½mm line in, four-port USB2 hub **PART CODE** HW223DP **LATEST PRICE** £180 inc VAT from www.dabs.com **DETAILS** www.hannsg.co.uk **FULL REVIEW** Aug 2007



Iiyama ProLite X486S-B1

Iiyama's ProLite X486S-B1 is a tastefully designed 19in LCD. The screen's glossy coating makes colours look richer and blacks darker, and the bright 400cd/m² backlight helps to overcome unwelcome reflections.

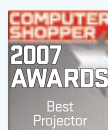
The X486S-B1 performs beautifully whether you're editing a spreadsheet, watching a movie or playing a game. Images are sharply detailed, colours are vibrant and rich but not oversaturated and skin tones are realistic.

Another nice design touch is the ambient light sensor, which adjusts brightness depending on light in the room and works well.

Considering all the extra features, the X486S-B1 is excellent value.



19in LCD 1,280x1,024 native resolution, 700:1 contrast ratio, 2ms response time (black-to-black), D-sub, DVI, one-port USB2 hub **PART CODE** X486SB1 **LATEST PRICE** £182 inc VAT from www.microwarehouse.co.uk **DETAILS** www.iiyama.co.uk **FULL REVIEW** Feb 2007



DELL 1800MP

Dell's 1800MP is a good all-round business projector, and at this price it's a bargain. The lamp costs only 8p per hour to run and the 2,100 ANSI lumens rating means that it's bright enough for presentations with the lights on. It throws an impressive 78in picture from just 2m, which is useful in a small room.

Image quality is great. Skin tones are realistic and colours are the best from any DLP projector we've seen this year. The 1800MP was also better than any other office projector tested in 2007 at anti-aliasing moving images to remove jagged edges.

The 1800MP is perfect for business use and doubles as a home cinema projector too.



OFFICE PROJECTOR DLP 1,024x768 native resolution, 2,000:1 contrast ratio, 2,100 ANSI lumens, D-sub, 3½mm line-in, component via VGA **PART CODE** 1800MP **LATEST PRICE** £507 inc VAT from [Dell 08703 533911](http://www.dell.co.uk) **DETAILS** www.dell.co.uk **FULL REVIEW** May 2007



LG 37LC55

LG's 37LC55 looks fabulous and has the performance to match. It's great for standard interlaced video sources, but really comes into its own when handling high-definition (HD) material and progressive scan DVDs. Colours are rich, yet have a natural appearance. It also handles fast-moving objects without any smearing or ghosting.

Picture quality when connected to a PC is excellent via a D-sub cable, and superb when using a digital connection. The set displayed easily the best Windows desktop of any LCD TV reviewed in 2007. Focus is pin-sharp, resulting in clearly displayed text that is legible at the smallest sizes.

This is a great TV with an excellent picture quality at a reasonable price.



37in LCD TV 1,366x768 native resolution, 1,600:1 contrast ratio, two HDMI, D-sub, component, two SCART **PART CODE** 37LC55 **LATEST PRICE** £550 inc VAT from www.empiredirect.co.uk **DETAILS** www.lge.com **FULL REVIEW** Nov 2007

EVESHAM Alqemi 32VX

★★★★

£450 inc VAT

Evesham's Alqemi 32VX has a stylish air to it. It has a glossy black surround around a screen that is raised slightly from the matte black frame. The Alqemi certainly doesn't look like a budget model, but at only £450 including VAT, it's the cheapest 32in TV we've seen.

Tuning takes place automatically as soon as the TV is switched on for both analogue and digital channels. The picture quality the 32VX produced from our aerial was reasonable. On the analogue channels it managed to display a passable Channel Five, something that other sets we have tested found difficult. It also turned in an average performance when it came to handling interlaced material.

Colours are rich and vibrant, but looked quite realistic in our HD movie clips and progressive scan DVD. This set does suffer a lot from noise, however, producing a considerable amount of speckling in solid areas of colour such as sky.

Connecting the TV to a PC isn't as straightforward as using one of the two HDMI inputs. If you keep HD

material on your media centre PC, you'll probably want to use a digital connection. Using the HDMI input, we were only able to get a resolution of 1,280x720. This is sufficient for watching HD movies, but for still images you'll want to switch to the D-sub input, over which it will display at the TV's native resolution of 1,366x768.

The speakers are placed down the sides of the screen. At 8W each, these are more than powerful enough to fill a large room. There's also a virtual surround option that proved surprisingly effective, giving the impression that sounds were coming from behind us.

There's an excellent range of inputs. There are two HDMI sockets, and both the SCART connections are RGB. An RGB SCART connection will give a better-quality picture than composite video, which can also be carried by SCART. Set-top boxes such as Sky+ or Virgin Media can benefit from this, as can DVD players, although component is a better connection for players that can output a progressive scan picture.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Affordable 32in TV
- ✓ Good for DVDs and HD
- ✗ Flawed HDMI connection from PC

32in LCD TV 1,366x768 native resolution, 1,200:1 contrast ratio, two HDMI, D-sub, component, two RGB SCART
PART CODE 32VXLCDLOW
SUPPLIER Evesham 08701 609500
DETAILS www.evesham.com



The Alqemi 32VX also has component, composite and S-video inputs. To change between inputs you have to keep pressing the Source button, but to make life easier you can disable any interfaces you're not using.

We were a little frustrated by the electronic programme guide (EPG). This doesn't have our preferred timeline layout, instead showing the information from one channel at a time. Accessing the EPG also cuts off the currently playing channel, which is a touch annoying.

Home users will be reassured by the one-year onsite swap-out warranty. This means that if any defects become apparent during that time, Evesham will bring a replacement and take the faulty set away, so you're never without a TV.

The Alqemi 32VX is a reasonably priced TV, with good picture quality. However, it is outperformed by last month's *Labs* winner, Toshiba's 32C3030, which costs only £40 more.

Lynley Oram

OCTIGEN 236617LNOTG

★★★★

£159 inc VAT

Octigen's 236617LNOTG is the cheapest 22in widescreen monitor we've seen, costing just £159 including VAT. It isn't the most stylish, though; the frame and stand are sturdy enough, but the shiny black finish gives the monitor a rather cheap, portable TV look.

It looks like a smaller display, thanks to the thin 20mm bezel. However, the screen elevation is exceptionally low at just 65mm, and the stand isn't height adjustable. This means you will probably need to buy a stand to get the display to the correct height to avoid back and shoulder pain.

The basic onscreen display (OSD) has all the controls that most users will need. Pressing one of the seven control buttons when the OSD isn't active will bring up the volume controls or change the viewing modes. It's a shame that a couple of these buttons aren't dedicated to brightness and contrast, although these settings are changed depending on which of the four viewing modes you choose. We found that Normal was the

best setting for most tasks, including watching videos. The Movie mode was overly bright, giving images a slightly washed-out look.

Despite the DVI label on the rear, there's only a D-sub input. A digital connection is best to get the most out of HD material, so if you plan to watch HD video from your PC, this may not be the monitor for you. We were impressed with the pin-sharp clarity of the Windows desktop at the native resolution of 1,680x1,050, though.

Our greyscale gradient test is particularly tricky for monitors, but the 236617LNOTG turned in a good performance and banding was barely noticeable. The 236617LNOTG has a contrast ratio of 1,000:1, which is above average for a monitor of this size.

Overall, images were crisp and sharp and the monitor managed to pick out even the smallest details in dark areas of our still images and movie clips. Whites are pure, too. The only slight gripe is that, when displaying a screen of solid black, there was some leakage from the 300cd/m² backlight across the bottom of the screen. Skin tones also

SUMMARY

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✓ Crisp and sharp images
- ✗ Murky, unrealistic colours

22in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,680x1,050 native resolution, 1,000:1 contrast ratio, 5ms response time (grey-to-grey), D-sub, 3½mm line-in
PART CODE 236617LNOTG
SUPPLIER www.spotonuk.com
DETAILS www.octigen.com



look a little ruddy compared to other displays, and colours were muted and a little murky, no matter how much we adjusted the controls.

The 236617LNOTG has surprisingly loud built-in 2W stereo speakers. However, they were also exceptionally tinny, and you won't want to use them for listening to music or playing games.

We were impressed with the viewing angles. Moving through 170° horizontally showed no dimming in brightness and we found we could lean a reasonable distance to the side before image quality started to deteriorate.

Octigen has done an excellent job at producing a good, budget monitor that is well suited to office tasks. However, for just £21 more you can get HannsG's HW223DP (see opposite), which has more features, a digital connection and better all-round performance.

Lynley Oram